

Starr County court-at-law
(HB 3153 by Rangel/Zaffirini)

DIGEST: HB 3153 would have granted the Starr County court-at-law shared jurisdiction with the district court in felony arraignments, pre-trial matters and acceptance of guilty pleas. The bill also would have added shared jurisdiction over controversies involving title to real property and would have increased the ceiling on civil jurisdiction from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

GOVERNOR'S
REASON
FOR VETO:

General felony jurisdiction has been vested by the Legislature in the district courts of this state and not in statutory county courts or constitutional county courts. This derives from the philosophy that individuals whose punishment can include incarceration within the state correctional system should be subject to state courts. As district courts are state-funded and vacancies are subject to the appointive powers of state officials, including the Texas Senate, all felony prosecutions, including preliminary matters, should continue to fall solely and exclusively within the purview of these courts.

RESPONSE: Rep. Irma Rangel, the author of HB 3153, said: "The governor's decision to veto county courts-at-law bills allowing for concurrent jurisdiction on arraignments, pre-trial matters, and jurisdiction to accept guilty pleas in felony criminal cases is disappointing inasmuch as jurisdiction over these matters is presently being exercised by other county courts-at-law in Texas. HB 3153 passed both houses unanimously, and unfortunately, we have provided no relief to our overburdened district court in Starr County."

NOTES: HB 3153 was considered on the Local Calendar and was not analyzed in a Daily Floor Report.

During the first called session the Legislature enacted SB 96 by Zaffirini, expanding the civil jurisdiction that the Starr County county-at-law shares with the district court by increasing the amount in controversy to \$100,000 and extending jurisdiction to suits involving real property. No provision for felony criminal jurisdiction was included. The House Research Organization digest of the companion bill to SB 96, HB 115 by Rangel, appeared in the July 14 Daily Floor Report.